

MEMORANDUM FOR ACSC CLASS OF 2006

FROM: Outgoing Student Class President

SUBJECT: ACSC – A Student's Perspective

1. Congratulations on your selection to attend ACSC! You will hear that A LOT your first week here. I wanted to write a short letter to welcome you but I also want to answer some of the questions that I know I had when I got selected to come here. The result is a much longer letter than I wanted to write (and some of you may want to read). The bottom line is with a positive attitude; you will have a great time in Alabama next year.
2. **CLASS ORGANIZATION.** Your class of nearly 600 students will be divided into four divisions with eleven seminars in each division. Each seminar consists of 13 to 14 students, composed of a cross-section from the student body. Expect to have one or two international officers, an Army officer, a Navy or Marine Corps officer, and a civilian or Air Reserve Component officer in a typical seminar. The rest of the seminar is composed of USAF officers from various specialties. Class leadership consists of a Command Staff, known as the COMSTAFF, and student seminar leaders. Two weeks prior to the class start date, the 50 senior USAF line officers based on date of rank will arrive on campus. Forty-four of these "First Fifty" will be the seminar leaders for the first semester. The other six will form the core of the COMSTAFF. They will really help with your transition to the school life.
3. **LEADERSHIP.** The Commandant interviews and selects the student class president and vice president. They, in turn, select the other key members of the COMSTAFF from the "First Fifty" or from the rest of the class after they arrive. Half way through the school, division Operations Officers will select new seminar leaders from among all other US service members to carry the class through to graduation. All students have an opportunity to get involved through various committees, class social functions, and other special projects that ACSC students do to help the local community. There are leadership and volunteer opportunities for everyone who wants to contribute.
4. **CALENDAR OVERVIEW.** The academic year is 10 months long with about a 2-week break at the end of December. You can also expect a 4-day weekend during Thanksgiving and the usual federal holidays. There is no "Spring Break," per se, and there are very limited opportunities for leave or TDY outside of curriculum breaks. I share this with you so you can manage your leave before arriving and aren't misled by rumors of a week long "Spring Break." There will be many class social functions throughout the year. These include a Fall Picnic, Fall Festival, Winter Festival, Winter Social/Holiday Party, International Officer Culture Day, Spring Fling, Graduation Ball, and any others that your class dreams up. In addition to social activities, your class will likely accomplish several community service projects throughout the year. These are led and completed by student volunteers. Our class participated heavily in The Tuskegee Field historical site groundbreaking, the Red Cross, Habitat for Humanity, as well as held several projects like Partners in Education and food and clothing drives. We were also active in local community projects at the individual level.
5. **BUDGET.** To produce these first-class social events and to cover other class expenses, the COMSTAFF develops a planning budget at the start of the year and then manages the class treasury throughout the year, according to the budget. To cover planned expenses, to enable social committees to make reservations at venues around Montgomery for major class social functions, and to prevent having to repeatedly collect money from 600 students for every function or expense, all students will be asked to contribute approximately \$150 to the class treasury at the beginning of the year. This fee, referred to as

“association dues,” will cover all social events for the student, a class coin, a yearbook, and class gifts. This fee is not mandatory but it will make it much easier for the COMSTAFF to manage the full social calendar and other class expenses throughout the year.

6. **ACADEMICS.** The Student Handbook and ACSC web site describe the various courses you will complete during your 10 months. Don’t get lost in the details. The goal is to develop your understanding of war at the operational level with a focus on the joint and combined application of air and space power. Each course lasts several weeks and consists of a combination of lectures in the main auditorium and seminar discussions. Despite what you may have heard from your superiors and previous students, “this is not your father’s ACSC.” The days of “Air Command and Golf College” are long gone! ACSC is graduate level education: your reading load is approximately 40-80 pages per night in preparation for about 4 hours of class every day. Each seminar will have a faculty course instructor who will lead and facilitate discussions, but it is the students who do the majority of the talking and debating. Tests, exercises, and student briefings are conducted throughout the year to evaluate your ability to apply what you have learned. Test formats vary, but you will normally have one or two 5-7 page essays per course. In-class tests are typically 4 hours long and you are usually given three days for take-home exams. Be prepared to write essays in paragraph format, not bullet background papers. Also, every student will complete a 20-30 page research paper.

7. **GUEST SPEAKERS.** One of the highlights of the year is the fascinating and high-ranking military and civilian guest speakers that address the class in the auditorium. We hosted the current and former Chiefs of Staff of the Air Force, as well as several other senior leaders from the USAF and other services. We also were privileged to hear from some of the authors of the texts we were studying and prominent members of various “think tanks.” The culmination of the guest speaker program is the Gathering of Eagles (GOE) that takes place during graduation week. Each year ACSC invites prominent air and space personnel from around the world to join and interact with the student body. These pioneering and heroic figures will sign GOE lithographs, retell war stories, explain their philosophies, and attend social events with students and families. It is a great way to end a challenging and fast-paced school year!

8. **FOLLOW-ON ASSIGNMENTS.** Our class is right in the middle of securing follow-on assignments. Many general officers and commanders have visited ACSC to interview classmates for follow-on jobs. Our classmates will fill assignments on Joint Staff, Air Staff, Combatant Command staffs, MAJCOM staffs, and Air Operations Center staffs, while many will assume command of squadrons after graduation. There are also opportunities for 30-40 classmates to attend advanced PME at the School of Advanced Air and Space Studies and a few may attend a sister service advanced PME school. Your 10 months at ACSC will well prepare you for any follow-on assignment.

9. I hope this letter gave you a good overview of ACSC and answered some of your questions. For more information, surf the ACSC web site. If you still have questions, please contact the orderly room, the mission support director, or the squadron commander. If all else fails, send me an e-mail at justin.speegle@maxwell.af.mil and I’ll get the answers for you. You are in store for a challenging and fulfilling year. Congratulations on your selection and good luck!

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President, Class of AY05